



Austin Zero Waste Alliance

“We’ll Stop at Nothing”

- Food waste in landfills leads to methane production, a greenhouse gas. This is vital for our climate goals.
- Many businesses, including restaurants are already composting successfully. If they can do it, why can’t others?
 - Concerns about bottom line issues are very real, but as this board knows composting is just the end of the line, and at the bottom of the food discard hierarchy. Restaurants can SAVE money by reducing and reusing consumption, and can minimize the need for composting by feeding hungry people and animals first before food discards ever hit the compost bin. This would allow for more capacity and less frequent pick ups and a smaller bill for service
- There is more than enough capacity for composting right now.
 - Certain restaurants hostile to composting requirements and their lobbyists are saying that there is not enough capacity. The companies offering the capacity say that there is. We should trust the experts who handle the wastes.
 - There are two elements of capacity: hauling and processing. As far as processing goes, TDS has more than 700 acres--more than enough. Organics by Gosh has a great deal too, as well as the significant and growing presence of local farms who don’t necessarily need permits
 - As far as hauling goes, these businesses can be established in shorter timeframes, and the ordinance provides the demand that they need to justify risk, secure investors and borrow money as need be. Every year of delay is another round of new businesses and new jobs delayed or eliminated from the hauling and processing industries.
 - Competition is stiff today for commercial composting contracts. As soon as the ordinance goes into effect it will increase. Those who support more market competition should support shorter timeframes, not longer ones.
- The URO composting timeline originally approved by Austin City Council mandated that all food-permitted businesses divert compost by the year 2017. After many months of stakeholder meetings, there was no discernable outrage by the restaurateurs who were going to be affected by the original shorter timeline.
- Prominent restaurant owners were allowed a private meeting with ARR staff and suddenly the timeline was dramatically changed to reflect an extended timeline of 2020. This was to be presented to the ZWAC subcommittee for the URO, but we caused a stink and the staff converted the subcommittee meeting to an additional stakeholder meeting where advocates and composters refuted claims of a bad pilot program and lack of capacity. This was unfair, and an adoption of this timeline would suggest that the stakeholder process was irrelevant, that the ZWAC subcommittee on the URO didn’t deserve all the information and public input and that the whims of the food industry reign supreme
- One or two bad experiences in a pilot program should not derail or delay implementation—that’s why we do pilot programs, to work out challenges
- The ordinance rules has a one year “educational” period wherein businesses can only be cited if they aggressively, willfully refuse to obey the ordinance. Businesses worried about being caught off guard have already had years of debate to prepare and will have a another year on top of that once the ordinance has passed.
 - This also means that the longer timeline would kick full commercial composting into the next decade